

# Research on gender and agriculture

*The International Center for Tropical Agriculture (CIAT) – a member of the CGIAR Consortium – develops technologies, innovative methods, and new knowledge that better enable farmers, especially smallholders, to enhance eco-efficiency in agriculture eco-efficient. This means we make production more competitive and profitable as well as sustainable and resilient through economically and ecologically sound use of natural resources and purchased inputs. Headquartered near Cali, Colombia, CIAT conducts research for development in tropical regions of Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, and Asia.*



## Empowering men and women farmers

CIAT is committed to reducing gender inequalities, especially in terms of access to resources and information, with the aim of empowering poor men and women. Understanding unequal social relations, particularly gender relations, is vital for achieving global objectives in agricultural research for development. These unequal relations often make women and marginalized groups more vulnerable to the effects of poverty, land degradation, and climate change.

## How we work

CIAT's gender strategy involves two approaches: (1) conducting strategic gender research to explain how gender disparities or gender relations affect agricultural innovation, productivity, and sustainability, and (2) integrating gender analysis into research on topics such as plant breeding, climate change adaptation, and integrated pest management.

CIAT joins forces with CGIAR Research Programs and many partners and donors around the world to address gender issues for the benefit of both men and women.



## Tangible impact

### Better health on mama's menu

In sweetpotato, the color orange can mean the difference between malnutrition and a healthy start to life for African children. Sweetpotatoes are easy to grow and highly tolerant to drought and diseases, but many of the traditionally grown white and yellow varieties are low in vitamin A. Deficiency in this essential nutrient can lead to blindness, disease, and premature death.

In Kenya, the Sweetpotato Action for Security and Health in Africa (Mama SASHA) project is sending pregnant women home with an unusual prescription: a voucher for orange-fleshed sweetpotato vines, which they can redeem from local farmers to grow their own nutritious tubers. Led by the International Potato Center (CIP) in coordination with the CGIAR Research Program on Roots, Tubers and Bananas (RTB), the project combines agriculture with better pre- and postnatal care to improve the health of mothers and children.

### A sweet outcome

Harvesting honey in Kenya's Lower Nyando valley has traditionally been men's work: labor intensive, dangerous, and not all that profitable. Farmers were only producing about 5kg of honey per beehive, per year – far below the potential yield of 90kg.

CIAT, the CGIAR Research Program on Climate Change, Agriculture and Food Security (CCAFS), and partners have trained women to become excellent beekeepers and also to process and market honey and other products. Women harvest the hives every 3 months and share the proceeds among members of an empowering self-help group, through which they can reinvest in other activities, such as basket weaving. The result is more diverse livelihoods, higher incomes, and greater resilience against climate change.

### Weeds to welcome

Most farmers and gardeners will do almost anything to keep weeds out of their plots. Yet, for some poor subsistence farmers, these undesirable plants form part of their livelihood strategy. In Khoud Khae village in Lao PDR, Mrs. Kam, a widow who has no livestock and only a small paddy field, collects weeds from her rice field as well as other wild food plants and non-timber products from the forest to trade for rice.

Many of the plants that allow Mrs. Kam and her grandson to survive are the same species that agronomists and rural extensionists are eliminating with pesticides. CIAT and the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI), through the Participatory Social Return on Investment (PSROI) Project, worked together to change traditional thinking on community planning and farming for rural families.

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